

Measuring the Delta as a Place: A Regional Opportunity Index and Economic Indicators

Jonathon London, UCD Center for Regional Change, jkldon@ucdavis.edu

[Alejo Kraus-Polk](mailto:akrauspolk@ucdavis.edu), UC Davis, akrauspolk@ucdavis.edu

The Delta Protection Commission's 2012 Economic Sustainability Plan (ESP) projected a 5 percent shift of Delta land towards higher-value vineyards and truck crops, assuming that land and water resources were protected. Proposed infrastructure (CalWaterFix) and ecosystem restoration projects could significantly alter the Delta's economy and the region's character. To gauge the pace and direction of change, and to understand the current socio-economic conditions of Delta residents and the communities in which they live, the DPC commissioned two projects from the Center for Regional Change at UC Davis.

1. A Report on the Delta, using the Center's Regional Opportunity Index (ROI), which is a comparative analysis of 33 key indicators that measure relative opportunity for both people and the places in which they live. The ROI focuses on six domains: education, economy, housing, transportation/mobility, health/environment, and civic engagement. The 2015 Report was based on a comprehensive analysis of these conditions within the Delta, comparing them to state averages. Overall, the ROI analysis presents a picture of a region struggling economically, with significant challenges related to health conditions as well. Further research and development efforts might include improving school quality, job quality and diversity, and health care, as well as expanding access to broadband internet.
2. A set of Economic Indicators for the Delta, including measures of economic, political, and social security, including the agricultural economy, labor market and job quality measures, and education. The indicators will be repeatable measures that can be examined every five years to document change across the region. The project will begin by interviewing stakeholders in the summer 2016, and will have draft indicators in tabular and map forms by late 2016.

Keywords: Socio-economic, economic opportunity, education, health care, agricultural economy, economic trends

Session Title: Delta as an Evolving Place

Session Time: Thursday 1:15 PM – 2:55 PM, Room 308-310

What Do We Know About Recreation in the Delta?

Greg Shaw, CSU Sacramento, sac14077@saclink.csus.edu

Dave Rolloff, CSU Sacramento, Rolloff@csus.edu

Amy Mickelson, CSU Sacramento, mickela@csus.edu

Beth Davidson, CSU Sacramento, Erickson@csus.edu

Boating, hunting, and fishing are long-standing contributors to the Delta's economy. However, recreational trends suggest increasing demand for non-motorized boating, agritourism, wildlife watching, and other non-consumptive activities. There is no current, regularly updated data about the demand for and economic impact of recreation in the Delta. The Delta Protection Commission (DPC) commissioned CSU Sacramento to study Delta recreation to support policy development and identify areas for potential investment.

Recreational Boating Needs Assessment: CSUS surveyed Delta boaters to identify patterns of boating use and spending, as well as infrastructure needs. The survey included law enforcement officers to identify areas of concern, facility issues, and trends in law enforcement. Public workshops offered an opportunity for the public to participate. Interim results will be available in late 2016, the final report will be available in June 2017.

Delta Recreation Research Strategy: CSUS will develop three research proposals to identify the socioeconomic dimensions of recreation in the Delta. The Strategy, scheduled for completion in July 2016, consists of a research prospectus for each of the following:

Non-motorized Watercraft Usage

Study the rapidly growing area of paddleboard, wind surfing, and kayak use in the Delta. Examine preferred locations, conflicts with other recreation groups, information needs, facilities, and calculate the economic impact of such recreation.

Economic Impact of Cultural Tourism and Agri-tourism

Study the economic impact, visitation preferences, information sources for people visiting farms, museums, wineries, historic buildings, and festivals in the Delta. Examine what they do, where they go, where they stay, and desired additional tourism infrastructure.

Barriers to Positive Tourism Development

Study potentially negative aspects of visitation in the Delta, such as traffic/infrastructure congestion, invasive species, litter, miscreant recreation styles, and water quality as factors that detract from the current recreation/tourism opportunities, or that create challenges for tourism growth.

Keywords: Boating, marinas, recreation, non-motorized watercraft, cultural heritage, tourism, wineries, museums

Session Title: Delta as an Evolving Place

Session Time: Thursday 1:15 PM – 2:55 PM, Room 308-310

Exploring the Creation of Food Hub in the Delta: The Sacramento-Yolo Rural-Urban Connections Strategy

David Shabazian, Sacramento Area of Council of Governments, dshabazian@sacog.org

The Delta Protection Commission's Strategic Plan seeks to stimulate agricultural-based economic development in a manner that protects and enhances the Delta's cultural, ecological and agricultural values. As part of this effort, the Commission funded a Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG) case study on potential strategies to preserve and enhance the long-term viability of agriculture in the Delta portion of Sacramento and Yolo counties. SACOG utilized tools developed from the Rural-Urban Connections Strategy project, which presumes that resource conservation is bolstered by strategies that leverage and enhance the value of these assets.

The case study assessed current agricultural conditions by developing a field-level model of the study area and investigated emerging market opportunities to stimulate further economic development. A finding was that Delta agriculture is well positioned to capitalize on the rapidly expanding demand for locally grown food in the Sacramento and Bay Area regions.

Infrastructural barriers, particularly the lack of mid-scale facilities, could impede the expansion of the Delta local food system. The case study conducted an in-depth financial analysis of expanding and creating new agricultural infrastructure through a food hub facility, which would offer aggregation, packing, processing, storage, marketing, and distribution capacity. The project team found the food hub model to be financially feasible for the hub operator and supplying farmer.

Finally, the case study conducted a range of agricultural scenarios to detail the magnitude of economic, environmental, and other impacts from potential cropping pattern changes. The three scenarios—continuing recent trends, advancing a food hub investment, and supporting agritourism—demonstrate possible strategies that Delta stakeholders may explore to accelerate growth in the local food system.

This research is important to Bay-Delta management by demonstrating that these strategies can help preserve open space habitat in areas vulnerable to urban development by making agriculture a viable economic driver.

Keywords: History, culture, education, transportation, communication, reclamation, restoration, communities, economics, arts

Session Title: Delta as an Evolving Place

Session Time: Thursday 1:15 PM – 2:55 PM, Room 308-310

Delta Narratives: Highlighting the Delta's Cultural and Historic Resources

Bob Benedetti, CSU Sacramento, rbenedetti@pacific.edu

Blake Roberts, Delta Protection Commission, Blake.Roberts@delta.ca.gov

Despite the environmental, economic, and political importance of the Delta, the human history of the region has been obscure and poorly understood. Funded by the Delta Protection Commission, Delta Narratives was a collaborative project involving a team of scholars and museum professionals that communicated the importance of the Delta region in California's - and America's – history by developing a cultural and historical framework for multi-format educational exhibits.

Humans have occupied the Delta continuously for over 10,000 years. The Gold Rush brought thousands to the Delta's water highways as they traveled to inland mines. Many saw the potential of the Delta's rich soil and soon the region became an agricultural destination. The Delta later attracted those who would relax or hide out in its labyrinth of sloughs. Today, the Delta's environmental significance has been recognized and its water resources hotly debated.

The diversity of team skills and resources was critical in recovering the stories behind these events. Five scholars related Delta narratives to larger trends in California and American history by preparing essays on transportation and communication, reclamation and restoration, ethnic and economic communities, and writers and visual artists. The scholars utilized the archives and artifacts of local historical societies, museums, and libraries in their research. Museum professionals worked with the scholars to propose a series of exhibition strategies to help the public become aware of the history and the many cultural institutions serving the region.

The final report recommended the distribution of Delta stories through electronic media, integration into California's educational curriculum, and organizing of regular Delta Days to celebrate the region's cultural and historical riches. The Commission is currently pursuing these recommendations.

This research is important to Bay-Delta management by providing a greater historical understanding of human interaction with the Delta ecosystem and a context for policy decision-making.

Keywords: Agriculture, infrastructure, economics, economic development, local food, food hub, agritourism

Session Title: Delta as an Evolving Place

Session Time: Thursday 1:15 PM – 2:55 PM, Room 308-310